Neo-Narratives in the Third Space: An Attempt at Re-imagining a Post-Spectator Philippine Social Studies Classroom

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Abstract:
This paper aims to demonstrate that Philippine Social Studies could and should move from a typical one-question-one-answer, spectator democracy experience towards being a rich site where historical, and socio-cultural issues, social narratives, and a new reading of knowledge and society may be highlighted. It used the concept of the "third space" as a pedagogical frame inspired by Bhabha's (1994) notion of an uncertain, blurry area which results from the interaction of two cultures and from Jones' (2011) work on reframing education in the third space. This is attempted in the Gawad Lampara, a student documentary festival of the University of the Philippines High School Iloilo. This is a collaborative cross-disciplinal activity in their Social Studies and Filipino language and literature classes. Data from written reflections, interviews, and focused group discussions reveals the students' deliberate attempts to grasp and make sense of the content they learned from their lessons by situating them along the socioeconomic and political realities they perceive and experience in a form of a short documentary. In the process of working together to offer their voice in a form of a neo-narrative, they surface historical and socio-cultural issues, uncertainties, conflicts, and contradictions that are rarely highlighted in a typical Social Studies class. Given a suitable context, social studies may be able to invite and enable both teachers and learners to move beyond just knowledge acquisition, and towards the emergence of a more engaged and critical way of learning and experience in this subject area.

Keywords: Social studies education, pedagogy, democracy

1. Social Studies in Philippine Basic Education

The overarching goals of the 2013 Philippine Basic Education Curriculum rests on the Four Pillars of 21st Century Learning: learning to learn, learning to do, learning to live together in peace and harmony and learning to be (UNESCO, 1998). In response to this, and other current and emerging socio-economic forces, learning areas in the curriculum are organized and their content aligned to address these demands. The general intention is for basic education to produce graduates who are either ready to pursue college, technical-vocation work and other means of employment, and entrepreneurship.

This new curriculum claims to be decongested, seamless in helping students move from one grade level to the next, and learner-centered and relevant. Learning areas were reorganized and restructured, including the Social Studies (Araling Panlipunan) which retained some of its former content focus, and with the addition of two specialized topics for Senior High School (Grades 11 and 12)

In the new curriculum, Araling Panlipunan will contain concepts about self, community, local history of the learner. Moreover, the new Araling Panlipunan covers a deeper understanding of the history, geography, politics, economy, and national development in the Philippines, in Asia and in the world. At the Senior High School level, students will learn about current issues and challenges and propose solutions to them. (Department of Education, 2012 p. 42)

This new Social Studies curriculum acknowledges the influence of globalization and other forces in the curricular content and the pedagogical method. This paper aims to show that situating the Social Studies content and pedagogy within the postcolonial discourse of the "third space" would evolve this learning area to a site where historical, and socio-cultural issues, ambiguities, and conflicts may be highlighted as learners are engaged in learning activities that enables them to develop "…critical thinking, logical reasoning, creativity, appreciation of one's culture, research skills, communication skills, responsibility, productivity, environmental consciousness, and having a global vision" (Department of Education, 2012 p. 42). Shifts in social studies education is geared towards the Four Pillars of 21st Century Learning. Thus 21st century learning does not only comprise individual consciousness and development, but as well as inclusive, collaborative, and collective engagement and growth.

2. Third Space in Education and Pedagogy

The school, the classrooms, and the curriculum are contested spaces where, in contrast to the mainstream view of it being neutral, it plays host to, and at times, also as a participant in the politics of knowledge, representation, and power (Provenzo, 2002). Contemporary postcolonial discourses have seeped in and inspired alternative discourses and movements in education and schooling. Friere's (1981) Pedagogy of the Oppressed highlights not only the links between classroom instruction and the wider socio-political backdrop, but also the dominance and imposition of Western knowledge and values that debases, and sweeps away local and indigenous knowledge, values, and experiences as inferior. In the Philippines, a country with a long and enduring experience of colonialism, tensions between the various first space discourses (e.g. Eurocentric knowledge systems; standardization) and second place discourse (e.g. indigenous knowledge systems; emancipation) have been highlighted by scholars and have been a source of confusion among those who would like to foster a culturally-relevant curricular content and pedagogy such as in Philippine science education (Barcenal, et al., 2002; Handa & Tippins, 2013).

Homi Bhabha (1994) in his work, The Location of Culture contends that the borderlines between these opposing knowledge worldviews are spaces were concepts of cultural identity and knowledge are constantly being negotiated and re-created. He calls this the "third space." Along with his notion of cultural hybridity, this is an area where two cultures interact characterized by uncertain and ambiguity, and where concepts of self, identity, culture, and knowledge become blurry. Navigating and working through and along this area where the knowledge and value systems of two cultures do not necessarily match or complement especially in the schools has proven to be confusing and difficult (Jegede & Aikenhead, 1999). Handa & Tippins (2013) attributed this to the society's colonial experience where, although there is imposition of sanctioned knowledge, some of it has met with resistance. Such has been some of the observations tied to the postcolonial discourse.

In this work, the third space is seen as an opportunity to re-situate and approach things, this time, learning and appreciating the social studies subject area in a different way in what Jones (2011) calls as "an-other way of seeing" (p.5). This is the space between the "first space" that emphasized the retention and testing of content, and the second space that emphasized emancipation and freedom. Central to this paper is the attempt to give the students the freedom to engage in their own version of "activism, imagination, and representation" (Licona, 2007) – characteristic of the third space – as they continuously grapple with overarching issues of cultural identity, voice, and significance. They had the opportunity to engage the material, prescribed or yet to explored, and to engage with their peers in an activity that requires them to develop their own valuation of the content and insights from their lessons in a form that they themselves made. This is through a form that their generation has access, proclivity, and proficiency in manipulating and creating with – the new media cyber and audio-visual media (Greenberg & Weber, 2008; Atal, 2005; Presky, 2001).

Filipino scholars have tried to problematize, understand, and work amidst the divides that contemporary forces and interactions of culture may create in the schools and classrooms by articulating multicultural lenses and approaches (Bernardo; 1995; Aguilar, 1997; Disomangcop, 1997; Arinto, 1996). Their work raises issues such as the value system that society needs to communicate through its schools, the nature and sources of knowledge that must be taught and validated in the various learning areas; the status of local knowledge, thought patterns, and experiences vis-à-vis Western knowledge; the cultural relevance of the curriculum; and culture-based pedagogy among others. Notably similar among the work of the local scholars who have elected to use a cultural lens in inquiring about the nature and process of schooling and education is their underscoring of the discontinuation between the culture of the home and that of the school. Often they positioned the culture of the school as Western, and therefore alien to that of the culture of the home, positioned as indigenous. The interaction, and the emphasis of one culture over the other in the venue of the school, creates a sort of tension for and among both the students, and teachers, and even the parents.

Local scholarship echoes the postcolonial emphasis on cultural identity as a key concept in the analysis, understanding, and (re)evaluation of schooling and education as a cultural phenomenon. These selected works, among others invite and provoke the thoughtful scholar-practitioner (Wasserman, 2009) in the authors, whose intention is to create new meaningful knowledge for our fellow practitioners, to raise some questions the epistemological positions we take in designing and implementing instruction, and the implications of these positions and practices on the cultural experience of schooling and education of our learners.

Social Studies has never been static and has been a site for several debates and setting up of new trends both by traditionalists and progressives (Thornton, 2008). However, the current approach in the Social Studies pedagogy does not seem to recognize the opportunities and possibilities that the challenges of cultural discontinuities (Disomangcop, 1997) and contemporary issues (Ibana et al, 2010) could offer for this learning area.

3. Objectives, Context, and Methodology

This paper wishes to extend this on-going conversation on post-colonial and third space notions as it examines some of the issues existing along the cultural dimensions that local scholars have established in their inquiry and practice within the context of social studies class. This paper aims to explore some of the aspects of the experiences and reflections of the high school students in a class project that attempts to situate their Grade 10 Social Studies (Economics) lessons within the notion of the third space. The class project required them to produce a documentary which in the process required them to locate and make sense of their local cultural identity and experience within the context of the subject matter content they learn in class. Vital to this paper is the experience of "ambiguity" and "betweeness" that they experienced. This typifies the third space that promotes and is consistent with the broader goals of social studies in the first place – "…critical thinking, logical reasoning, creativity, appreciation of one's culture, research skills, communication skills, responsibility, productivity, environmental consciousness, and having a global vision"(Department of

Education, 2012 p. 42). Thus, it will highlight the experience of ambiguity of the learners how these became a hotbed for the exploration and re-narration of deep-rooted socioeconomic issues that would otherwise become mere textbook-to-examination experience in many social studies classrooms in the Philippines.

This paper aims to (a) describe the students' navigation through the processes and ambiguities that they have experienced in producing their documentaries; (b) discuss the salient reflections and insights that they have learned from engaging in this learning activity; and (c) present some implications for social studies teaching and learning gleaned from the students' attempt and experience of locating and making sense of their local socio-cultural questions identities within the context of the larger context of their social studies lessons.

It will feature the students' attempt to locate their cultural knowledge and experience against a global-local backdrop, and the challenges and issues they faced in the process. This paper will use the context of the Grade 10 Social Studies (Economics) class as the site where students encounter the ambiguity and conflict associated with the notion and experience of the third space as they fulfil a learning outcome or product requirement of this subject area. It is in these respective contexts where the learners' self-ascribed cultural identities and local cultural capital merge/counter/match with that of the Western-based, capital-centric social studies content and experience they learn and try to make cultural sense of. Social studies is the learning area which Disomangcop (1997) claims still needs to address issues of cultural dissonance in its curricular content that needs to take into account the cultural diversity of the Philippines as a reaction to the domination of the cultural discourses and experience of the capital, Manila in particular, and of Western society in general.

This paper used an interpretivist methodological frame focusing on the "socially-constructed meaning" (Neuman, 2006: 87) that the students have negotiated and created. Eight unstructured interviews, two focus-group discussions, and analysis of students' written work and reflections were the main sources of data. The data were gathered from the analysis of the experiences, reflections, and write-ups of sixty-one (61) high school students of ages 16-17 enrolled in a high school Grade 10 Social Studies class (Economics) at the University of the Philippines High School Iloilo (UPHSI), a laboratory high school of the University of the Philippines Visayas located city of Iloilo, The Philippines. They predominantly identify themselves as Ilonggo, although a few of them acknowledge that they come from a mix of Ilonggo and other Philippine ethno-linguistic groups.

This activity took more or less two months from conceptualization to performance. While the work was in progress, gradual data gathering was done with the purpose of understanding the processes that the various groups have initiated to come up with their work. These provided vital data aside from their final written outputs. Data analysis became more of an "emergently inductive activity" (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p.184) as it called for an "intensive immersion in the data, allowing your data to interact with your intuition and sensibilities as these latter are informed by your knowledge of topics and questions." To increase the credibility of findings an iterative process (Suter, 2006) of separately studying the different data sources was done before finalizing the analysis taking note of the themes that emerged, re-emerge and had disappeared after all the readings of the data have been done.

The authors are the Social Studies and Filipino teachers of the students, and thus, they had to acknowledge their reflexivity throughout this inquiry. Like in many qualitative studies, the issues of voice and representation also heavily figure in this one, and thus appropriate steps to ensure authenticity were done (Guba and Lincoln, 2005; Dowling, 2008).

4. The Gawad Lampara Documentary Festival

This part of the paper would like to briefly describe the learning activity and the product that the students developed as the site and context of this inquiry. Generally, it aimed at creating a third space in the light of what Maniotes (2005) calls a "classroom where students' cultural capital merged with content of the curriculum as students backed up their arguments in literature discussions."

The Gawad Lampara Documentary Festival is an outcome-based learning activity done in collaboration with another of the student's subject area – Filipino IV – a language and literature class where they tackled Philippine national hero Jose Rizal's novel, El Filibusterismo. The project was first initiated in the students' Filipino class and was the brainchild of their Filipino IV teacher. The students' main task was to produce a short documentary of seven to ten minutes tacking key socioeconomic issues. The students form a group of five to six. They choose a chapter for the novel as an inspiration for the documentary film that they would be developing. The project must not only reflect a contemporary commentary on the essence of the novel's chapter but must equally project and examine a socio-economic reality that make use of the major issues relevant to the economic development issues and involved citizenship which are the content of their Social Studies lessons. This particular condition served to satisfy the demands of the first space. The creative, speculative, intuitive, and affective sides of documentary-making process on the other hand served to satisfy the emancipatory demands of the second space.

The conceptualization, research, writing, storyboarding, initial feedbacking, conferencing and consultations, negotiations, filming, editing, and the actual showcase of the products took two months. The students took pains to make sure that their concepts and data are well-researched and supported by both the basic principles in their lessons, and the empirical data they got from their interviews and fact-finding activities. The co-author of this paper, their teacher in Filipino mentored them in the writing of their storyboards and their scripts. The project culminated with a documentary film festival themed a film gala show in March 20, 2015 at the Cinemateque, a mini film theatre within the campus. The students and the faculty-judges shared cocktails before and after the viewing of the films. The top five films were recognized and other minor prizes for cinematography, editing, scriptwriting, and music were also given. The students' film entries were the following:

1. Perya (Fairs).This documentary features both a socio-economic analysis of the local travelling fairs and the people who chose to live the life of being a "manug-perya." It delves into how their daily lives, and the seemingly absurd reasons of choosing this kind of life presents a subsistence-based, nomadic life. It also looks into the decisions and motivations of the people who make the perya as their livelihood and an attempt to connect the dynamics of the place to the larger economy.

2. Isagani: Limot na Pag-asa (Isagani: Forgotten Hope). This documentary mainly features an interview with a young student activist. It delves into his motivations and his key activities as an activist as he mobilizes his fellow youth into various forms of action on key socioeconomic issues. It also attempts to shatter the common notion that student activists don't do well in their studies because they are preoccupied with their social engagements and movements. The young activist featured in this documentary is in the running for highest academic honor in the university.

3. Imperyno sa Langit: Overpass (Hell in Heaven: Overpass). This documentary is a satirical commentary on the uselessness and redundancy of some publicly-funded infrastructures such as the overpass. It claims that the political powers' control and discretion over public infrastructure funds and their unstudied building of these is senseless and does not directly and significantly create a positive impact on the lives of the people. It also shows how we as a people lack social consciousness and discipline expected of people living in an informed, educated democratic society.

4. Boy Juli. This documentary features the plight of one segment of the labor force whom because of poverty had to work and forgo many socio-economic opportunities. It features Juli, an effeminate male helper who candidly recounts his life story and many hard decisions and experiences he had gone through. His story is set upon the backdrop of the prevailing socio-economic scenario where people had to sacrifice a lot just to enable themselves to provide for their family's basic needs and survive. It also presents the main points of the law protecting the household helpers, the so-called Kasambahay Law.

5. Pag-asang Nakahandusay sa Lansangan (Hope Languishing on the Streets). This documentary features the condition of some children who chose or were forced to live on the streets of Iloilo City. It paints an ironic picture of the hopeful vibrant youth who are supposed to be the bearers of a better future for the society as envisioned by Philippine national hero, Jose Rizal. It looked into their usual lives and the circumstances that placed them there. Personnel from the local social development office explained the dilemma of both the government and the families who make a life out in the streets, and some of the efforts on how this is addressed.

6. Forgotten 44. This documentary attempts to gauge the local sentiments of the Ilonggos about the skirmish involving the Special Action Force of the Philippine National Police and forces of the MILF in the area of Mamasapano in Mindanao. It features interviews with uniformed and non-uniformed personnel. It also tackles the role the police force is playing in the society, and ends with the hope that the Fallen 44 members of the SAF would not end up becoming the Forgotten 44.

7. Kalayaan sa Pag-gamit ng Sariling Wika (Freedom to Use a Language). This documentary examines the language issue in education and schools amidst the backdrop of the instituted Mother Tonge-based Multi-lingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy of the Philippines' Department of Education. It argues that a lot of the difficulties that the learners experience in school learning is because of the foreign language and culture that is imposed on them. Interviews with school administrators who implement the MTB-MLE is also featured.

8. Trapo (Tarpaulin). This documentary tackles the prevalence of political signage located all over the city of Iloilo posted by local politicians and lawmakers to mark publicly-funded projects. The signage creates an impression that it is these politicians are the ones funding these projects. The film questions the need and usefulness of these signage and other forms of help or patronage, and further hints that it is the backward socio-political consciousness of the people that created and sustained this practice.

9. Ang Paboritong Batchoy ni Totoy (Totoy's Favorite Batchoy). This documentary tackles food as a common fixture in the culture and economy of a certain place. The city of Iloilo is famed for its Batchoy, a noodle-based soup that originated in the district of La Paz. This film looks into the main processes of how it is made set amid the backdrop of a changing and thriving local commercial environment while it still tries to stay true to its cultural traditions.

10. Mahal ang Pagmamahal (Love is Expensive). This document is a commentary on the prevailing notions of love and marriage – that is, it must be based on love and not on practical reasons. The film attempts to examine how people view marriage. It also argues that important events like marriage must also be approached with objectivity and the use of reason and logic as like any other economic option. It also affirms that marriage is not a decision that must be taken lightly by any of the parties who wish to enter into it.

11. Tara, Tsismis Tayo (Come, Let's Gossip). This documentary tackles the socio-cultural phenomenon of gossip, locally termed as tsismis. Through expert interviews, the film argues that people who engage in gossip are most likely the people who have enough time on their hands and who may not have anything productive worth doing. Some implications of this practice is also presented in the documentary.

12. Sementeryo (Cemetery). This documentary explores the condition of some of the city's public cemeteries. It explored both the mainstream public cemeteries and the old Chinese cemetery. It looks at the cemetery as a sort of social barometer of the status of society where concepts like justice and access, status and privilege are at play. In the film it argues that the cemetery is a microcosm of society, and that the attention and neglect accorded these places speaks of the priorities of society.

Reflections were also gathered from the students after the film festival to supplement the earlier data gathered from the earlier interviews, FGD's and write-ups.

5. Ambiguities, Conversations, and the Neo-Narrative

Your see, ours is a group of people who are stubborn and wants to do the project his/her own way. Our ideas clashed with one another, and we can't arrive on a theme that everyone can agree upon. Because of this, we lost the entusiasm (sic) we previously had on the activity. We rarely meet, always postpone discussions, and generally just procrastinated. (Josie T., 17)

The framers of Social Studies as an area of study did not envision it as a purely individualistic pursuit of knowledge and facts (Ellis, 1991; Michaelis, 1992; Agno, 1998). On the contrary, it was intended to enable learners to experience democracy and the responsible exercise of freedom (Michaelis, 1992; Banks & Banks, 2002; Banks & Banks, 2010) amidst the diversity in society. This necessitates the need to create a space and opportunity for the learners to engage one another in dialogue and conversations. Dialogue has been seen as an essential ingredient in liberatory and democratic pedagogy (Provenzo, 2002; Ross, 2001; Friere, 1981). Naturally, there would be varying views and conflicts, but the spirit of Social Studies education requires the teaching and learning process to trust the learners in coming up with a consensus agreeable to all – just like in a democracy. This may be confusing and troubling to some, if not many learners and teachers since this really takes time and commitment. It is putting everyone together that presents a significant obstacle. As one student recounted:

Though we have Alliah in the group, we still managed to cram. [A few] days were left to submit our draft for our script. Guess what? Our topic is not yet final! Our conversations [were] like "Jeb! What's our topic?" "Alliah, do you have any suggestions for our documentary? "Kent, where's Rigel?" They are present in our meetings but these were informal…(Novie S., 16)

Ambiguities and conflicts had been observed across all groups in varying degrees ever since the project began. From the Social Studies perspective of this collaborative project, it began with the ascertaining and establishment of a cultural ground zero, a sort of anchor or consistent context from which the students would anchor their perspectives and directions. So, in order to proceed with their work, the students had to address questions such as "From which perspective are we looking at this issue?" "Why are even these considered to be issues?" "Why focus on these issues?" "What is the link between the Ilonggo experience and economics?" These questions and as well as the others stages and tasks have become a source of conflicts. Add this to the challenge of navigating through the various tastes and cognitive filters that the students initially have when they started meeting in their respective groups.

Kumashiro's (2009) notion of "learning by crisis" provides an insight into the key role of these ambiguities and questions they encountered. He asserts that it is

…a state of emotional discomfort and disorientation that calls on students to make some change. When in crisis, students feel that they have just learned something that requires some response. Sometimes this crisis is visceral and noticeable, as when students express feelings of guilt or anger, or in some way resist continuing with the lesson. At other times, this crisis is subdued and subconscious, as when students feel discomfort but are unable to name that feeling. In either case, students who are in crisis are on the verge of some shift and require the opportunity to work through their emotions and disorientation…What is important, here, is the notion that, while crisis may be a necessary part of the learning process, it is not itself what constitutes learning. Entering crisis is merely the stage where students confront troubling knowledge. To change their thinking in ways that work against oppression, students need a learning process that helps them to work through their crisis. Entering crisis can be a condition that makes learning possible, but it can also be a condition that makes learning difficult. (p.30)

True to the Social Studies education form, and capitalizing on this "crisis," the project began with some basic ground rules, and central to this is the rule that "all decisions and processes must be reached and executed using the democratic process." This "democratic process" usually happened in the context of group conversations. It is through these conversations where they test each other tastes and temperaments. A more apt term for this would be pakikiramdam (de Guia, 2005) or the local Hiligaynon term, pagpamatyag which is very typical of the Filipino indigenous psyche. Breakthroughs on the processes – from the concept, the script, and the technical aspects – get clarified and reach a new level of refinement, when they are given the space and opportunity to just sit down and talk with each other. This has been especially fruitful since they have a small group and each one could easily monitor each other's progress in terms of the project deliverables.

Aside from using free-flowing and democratic spaces for conversations and dialogues, another tool that helped clarified ambiguities and issues was the writing process phase of the larger documentary making process. The writing process essential in the development process of the documentaries highlight an attempt not only in addressing socio-cultural ambiguities that they have experienced or observed. It is also an attempt to grapple with the creation of a neo-narrative – a social narrative. Heffernan (2004) citing his work with a colleague, described how this alternative form of narrative finds the personal experiences and insights of the students blending with the knowledge and issues they are grappling with:

Social-narrative writing does not reject the personal, but rather builds on it. Blending the personal and the social into fictional texts makes social narrative a hybrid genre, one that may bring power and purpose…as student writers come together to discover and share cultural themes and social issues. (p.71)

Spaces and opportunities for conversations and writing, and as well as conversations about their writing, created a sense of community among the students. This was gradually shifting from the previously detached, impersonal stance that they are expected to have in first space classroom set ups where they have to work independently and just mind their own business. This new set up of collectively addressing ambiguities and challenges, created a sort of gemeinshaft social network where students become more mindful of the feelings and experiences of their peers, and project a more empathic stance towards their group members and other groups. They have eventually become convinced that they could never separate who they are (their cultural identity) from the issues that they are

addressing in their documentaries. Cultural elements from their backgrounds seem to seep into their writings, and eventually into the finished product itself.

The students' experience in addressing the ambiguities and challenges mirrors that of a project designed for social action. Fleming and Boulton (2006) notes that this happens when "(a) the group takes collective action to address an issue they have identified, and (b) over time, group members assume increasing responsibility for making decisions and executing tasks while the teacher-facilitator moves further into the background." (p.105) This was somehow the case with the students. From a group of driven, individualistic, and competitive young people, they have become a community, only varying in approaches, that wants to tell a story, show an image, and propose a different take on a common reality. Because of an impending deadline, they learned how to manage their project – assigning tasks, determining deliverables, pursing results, and dialoguing – to make sure that they finish on time. This after all, is one of the main intelligence domains that Social Studies aims to achieve – interpersonal intelligence – to relate well with others, and also the fourth pillar of UNESCO's Four Pillars of Learning – learning to live together in peace and harmony. One student's reflection seems to resound with this thought:

I learned that not everything in this world can be done alone…this realization is important for me because I used to believe that in this world, being able to work alone is the greatest key to survival. I used to be a non-believer of teamwork and camaraderie. Because of this activity, my beliefs somehow changed. I now trust other people and believe in their abilities. This is very important for me because it makes me feel a lot more human. (Jeb G., 16)

As Jones (2011) claims, endeavours in the third spaces tend to be "transformative." it invites participants to see commonly experienced realities in various ways.

6. Tell a Story, Start a Change

This part of the paper wishes to discuss the salient reflections and insights that the students generated throughout the learning process described above. The students were elated at the prospect of putting together a story, a narrative and putting that story into a form that is appealing for both of them and the larger community. It was during these writing sessions, and the time thereafter when they affirmed the possibilities of writing social narratives. They were excited with the prospect of showcasing their work, and the subsequent reactions that people would have made out of them. Heffernan (2004:71) noted that when students write social narratives, they also

- Shared cultural resources as they look on the identities, dilemmas, and obstacles of self and others
- Used fiction writing as a tool for constructing and analyzing shared social worlds,
- Participated in… a writing collective in which writing is viewed as a form of social action, a vehicle for broadcasting messages to others. (p.71)

The project basically challenged them to present a contemporary socio-economic reality and examine in using the concepts learned in class, and as well as related concepts and data gleaned from their own research. Yet it was this exercise that pitted them face-to-face with the reality that they are trying to present. There was this general unnerving feeling when the students suddenly realize that they are having an up-close-and-personal encounter with the very source of the data that they would be using. Often times, they would get a lot of their data as secondary sources in printed, electronic, or online sources. As one student confesses

I have always been one of those people that we have described in our documentary, someone to [sic] busy with her life to notice everything else. Sure, I've heard and/or watched about all kinds of social issues in the television, read about them in the papers or the Internet, but I've never seen them first hand. Now, I did, I've seen, felt, heard the reality of it. It felt so real that it scared me. It could've been me on those streets, playing around, working instead of going to school. I realized that I had a lot to be thankful for. (Josie T., 17)

Calling for Social Action is one of the higher intentions of this project. But before they could be engaged into thinking about Social Action, they must be able to first have some degree of sociological imagination. Sociologist C.W. Mills in Massey (2003) claimed that sociological imagination is the "…quality of mind essential to grasp the interplay of man and society, biography and history, of self and world." (p.13) He further asserts that it "…enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals." (p.15) The students were able to use the previously abstract and vague concepts they have had in Social Studies and use them to label and make sense of the experiences and data that they were encountering personally, and thereby situate their currently and emerging knowledge and insights along a broader spectrum of disciplinal concepts and principles. Among the learners, they have come up with their own symbolic metaphors and meanings as to the data that they discovered and what they respectively represent. As some students provided these realizations:

What I realized in doing the documentary is that we have a really flawed justice system here in this country. Cases like this takes years and years before justice is served. And also, for I have observed, justice is only served to people who have money, power, and a high position in the government. (J-El G., 16)

Our documentary is about Political Ads, and if not, hidden propaganda. Politics is usually connected to economics and has a great part in it. Leadership in politics affect the economy of the country. (Jo-ann M., 16)

The cemetery symbolizes the society because when the cemetery is crowded there is no or minimum space. It is also applicable to the society because as what we can see right now, the stacked graves are like the stacked infrastructures like high malls and buildings across the city. (Martin T., 16)

I only have one lesson that I learned while doing this documentary and that is how small things represent bigger things. I realized how perya can represent our country or society and how lives different people in it can affect the well-being of the place. I saw that the peryahan is not as lively and progressive looking if there are no people from the baranggay to play the games found there, but when the night came and people were starting to crowd, I saw how noisy and how the money flows smoothly in every game I found. This is a lesson or realization for me because ever since my first visit to the peryahan I just gambled there without giving the place any deeper meaning. (Karissa R., 16)

The students were attempting to actively use their sociological imagination by bringing to fore relevant issues which they thought urgently needs attention, awareness, and action beyond their ranks. In their produced documentaries and in their several reflections, it can be observed that several of them were proposing to go beyond just labelling and making sense of these experiences within the context of their social studies lessons. They were proposing that more questions must be raised, and that some actions and changes must be taken. This is analogous to the aims of Social Action in education which

…redefines the relationship between professionals and service users – in this case, between teachers and young people. It presents a democratic framework for true partnership, and it is inclusive rather than exclusive. Social Action has the potential to engage the most hard-to-reach young people because it starts from their understanding of what needs to change and relies on their efforts to change it. This approach contrasts with many others that define young people as the problem to be tackled or changed. Social Action views young people, parents, and communities as experts about their lives and as capable of creating positive and lasting social change (Fleming & Boulton, 2006 p.87).

Media, specifically, audio-visual media has been a popular mode for young people to express their views and as a vehicle to call attention to get things done (Greenberg & Weber, 2008; Presky, 2001). They believe that this is their "zone" and that they feel capable and empowered when using the medium. Thus for them a documentary, a medium that is increasingly becoming accessible as a constructive means for many young people to present their voice, is a convenient and effective way to get the stories that they tell, and thereby, their message, across to the people who might be in a better position than themselves as of the moment to address the issues and realities they wanted to highlight. They are also mindful of the impact of media as a tool that could influence people's notions of what is real or natural. As one student reflected in their decision not to make their documentary more visually pleasing, and with a tactful allusion to one of the characters from their novel of inspiration, she asserted that

We do not need to construct reality to touch other people's hearts (with our documentary) and to win. We just need to be honest, and show the audience what we got. No perfection, no sugar-coating, no Ben Zayb. Just the truth, and we did achieve our goal, we sent our message to the audience, we inspired them in our own little ways, and we were rewarded. (Clarisee B., 17)

This activity has made them realize that their notions of justice, fairness, equity, and sense of identity, among others as higher human ideals embedded in their lessons could be given light and attention using the means that they knew best to use. They have also realized that to tell a story, is to call attention not only to the socio-economic issues alone, but also to the impact of this re-telling of a social narrative to them, as the ones who are re-telling it.

7. Social Studies: Beyond Knowledge Acquisition

The postcolonial discourse in education in the Philippines is alive along the debates on the nature of social studies education. Despite its emancipatory rhetoric, Philippine Social Studies is still largely operated within the first space and has a noticeable amount of Western-centric and Manila-centric discourse (Disomangcop, 1997). Vis-à-vis the aims of the current Social Studies curriculum, the way it is taught and learned is quite far from its supposedly reconstructionist aspirations. This is not unique to the Philippine experience. Even in the United States, where our country's notions of social studies for democratic citizenship has been derived, seems to suffer from this disconnect as well. Social studies education scholar E. Wayne Ross (2001) observed that

The traditional patterns of social studies teaching, curriculum, and teacher education, however, reflect little of the social reconstructionist vision of the future, and current practices in these areas are more often focused on implementing curriculum standards and responding to high-stakes tests than developing and working toward a vision of a socially just world (p. 315).

This is practically apparent in the hyped "quiz bee culture" associated with Social Studies. A telling and concrete illustration of this is the institutionalized culture of the academic social studies quiz contests where learners are pitted against each other in a battle to determine who has command of more information. This creates an individualistic and mechanical scheme of learning; that is of knowledge acquisition, far from the supposedly critical thinking-oriented, emancipatory, collaborative, and transformative approach imagined by the framers and scholars of social studies. The quiz bee system provides factual level questions, and it celebrates those who have that knowledge. This culture seeps into the Social Studies classrooms and thus, it comes to no surprise that a large amount of pedagogical approaches and activities in this content area are aimed at knowledge acquisition. It creates a picture where Social Studies is basically about providing the right answers to a set of predetermined questions. This preoccupation with knowledge acquisition leaves out, as Ibana (2010) reports, critical discussions of key and relevant social issues inside social studies classes themselves.

The students who produced the documentary felt the gradual shift from them mere collection and retention of knowledge towards the search for and critical study of knowledge. Some students note that

A typical social science class is all about reading books, watching films, and listening to the teacher. Ours is different. We read, yes, but we are made to think critically and think about the value and importance of the lesson in society. We are pushed to realizations. Yes, we watch films, but we're the ones who made those films. We are not spoonfed (sic)! (Joser B., 16)

I think the only similar thing between our social science class and that of the other schools is the lessons. We cover the same lesson and have the same information. But I think that there are many things that are only unique and it is in our social science class…the workload of others are very lighter compared to ours. Then, the expectations of others from them is minimal, while expectations of us are really high. I think that Gawad Lampara can only be found in Yupihay because its true meaning only exists here, which is for the young minds, like ours, to express their small thoughts about the big things happening all around them. (Justine E., 16)

Today's multicultural "runaway world" (Giddens, 2005) fraught by the effects of globalization, shifting demographics, and migration requires social studies to go beyond just knowledge acquisition. Realities and challenges are never neutral, as they are often political (Giroux, 2004) and these are continuously subverted and changed (Provenzo, 2002). Thus Social Studies teachers may find it helpful to see the larger world as a classroom and the concept of education becoming diversified. They may need to see it as a transformative force (Freire, 1981; Giroux & McLaren, 1986; Provenzo, 2002; Jones, 2011). A portion of one student's reflection explains why

…It was to make the students learn not only within the four walls of the classroom, but also outside the classroom boundaries and school periphery. The world outside the classroom offers much more lessons and ideas than what (the) school can provide. Students are trained to seek answers to their questions and solutions to their problems. This activity could also help students in distinguishing between facts and opinions or personal feelings. It could also help students to know the different cultures of the people and it could also harnessed (sic) their abilities and skills in communicating with other people which is also the main purpose of social studies. (Angelyn T., 16)

Social Studies needs to gradually depart from the usual processes of instruction that continues to persists even in the Social Studies classrooms of developed countries which Ross (2001) described as a "…text-oriented, whole group, teacher-centered approaches aimed toward the transmission of "factual" information" (p.315). As a strategy, this project is a pedagogical alternative waiting to be examined, reflected on, and re-imagined.

8. Conclusion: Post-Spectator Democracy

This paper was able to present how a Philippine Social Studies classroom that is situated in the third space could enable the students and even the teacher to move from just studying democratic citizenship and the forces that shape it, into experiencing democratic citizenship and being actively engaged as one of the voices that help shape it. It has illustrated how a social studies class was able to move from engaging in spectator democracy (Ross, 2001) to active democracy. It was able describe how the class navigated through the challenge of clarifying personal and cultural ambiguities through dialogue and enabling spaces towards the writing of an alternative social narrative that eventually transformed their views and experiences on how social studies could be taught and learned.

It has hopefully dispelled the fears of those in the first space of having too much emancipation freedom to the point of academic chaos, and as well as the objections of those on the second space against the obsession of covering mandated content. But beyond the power it gave the learners to scrutinize, break down, analyze, and even subvert, third space learning activities also gave them the opportunity to appreciate the efforts of those who have been engaged in similar tasks. As one student director and scriptwriter who aspires to be a lawyer puts it:

I give my fullest appreciation to the media industry. I now know how hard work for them is. Specifically, I salute the directors for the infinite concepts and unquestionable leadership that leads the whole crew. I applaud the scriptwriters for their remarkable views and thoughts and social standings that help change the world both for better and worse. And I bow down to the editors, for the long lasting patience and unique creativity that add skin recreating the art, making it viewable and ready. (PJ I., 17)

Parallel to the basic processes in this project are some of the conditions of (a) inclusion; (b) engagement in active, diversity-sensitive, meaningful learning activities; (c) building of learning support strategies; and (d) fostering of collaboration within and beyond the school (Gibson & Peterson, 2001: 325). These conditions encouraged the students' powers to wonder, critique, and build are essential ingredients to the pursuit of promoting an active, informed, just, humane, and democratic society. This is captured in one of the students' reflections when he said that

One of the social concepts and issues discussed in our documentary is the (sic) human investment. Education is the key to human resources. If this resource will continue to grow, obviously our nation will also grow. It is because we humans constitute the nation and we have to do something to make it stable and sustainable for us to live. (Blan C., 16)

When students, teachers, schools, community recognize and affirm each other's contribution towards the attainment of our collective notions of what it is to be educated in the 21st century, as what the current curriculum would have intended, the matter of whether one pursues a college a college , technical-vocational, or entrepreneurship track after basic education would not be as significant anymore. What would have really matters is that the graduates of the Philippine Basic Education system would have learned how to learn, how to do, how to be, and how to live together in peace and harmony (UNESCO, 1998).

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